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PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

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I HAVE spoken of physical culture, and of the physical laws, the observance of which directly conduces to the preservation of health, in their relations to the *individual.* I have endeavored to show what is the obligation to these laws, and the entire reasonableness of their strictest observance, from the consideration of personal interest in doing what is right in this regard. A very important subject for thought remains. I now refer to the interest of others, and of the State, in the observance just alluded to, and I shall endeavor to show how wide is the responsibleness of men in this regard, and how faithless to duty are they in their neglect of this responsibleness.

I. A man transmits himself in an important sense to his offspring. This remark applies not merely to the physical, to that which distinguishes a man physically from others, his form, his face, his expression, his manner. It reaches deeper than all this. It embraces the moral, the intellectual, the religious. What an age, or what a man does, dies not with it, or with him. It impresses itself upon his own time, and those who make it just what it is, as far as his influence extends, and it does the same in regard to the coming time. Opinions of all sorts, religious, moral and literary, are inherited, so that we find the old repeated in the young, and this after a manner and in a degree which is not wholly explained by the fact that the parent and the child live together, so that what belongs to the one, comes to belong to

the other. I can understand how habitual modes of thought can so impress themselves on the organ of the mind, the brain of the parent, as to affect its conformation, or its physical state, just as I can understand how the brain may come to influence intellectual habits. For instance, I see an idiot. I see in him something in the configuration of the head which distinguishes him from other men. The head is very small, or is deformed,—it may be frightfully large. We know that such condition of the head depends upon that which is within the skull, that they are exactly fitted to each other. I can understand how the *physical* of such a being may be transmitted to another. We do know that such unfortunates are met with in the same family, their organization depending upon some hidden peculiarity in the organization of one or both parents. Now suppose such an idiot should in very early life be subjected to the methods of instruction now in such successful operation in the Bicêtre and Salpétrière hospitals, so called, in Paris—and that he experience intellectual and moral development, so as to be able to solve the problems of Euclid, and to understand what is duty, both in its nature, and in its obligation. Might we not look for a great change in the organic condition of such a young person, and that if configuration of the head, for instance, did not materially change, that changes would be brought about in the brain itself, and activity be imparted to it, or to portions of it, which would so alter them, or it, as to become permanent conditions, and which would so be transmitted to progeny?

I put the case here in the form of question, because I have not at hand the facts which might give to it another form. And for the moment admit the supposition to have in it any truth. How powerful becomes the argument at once for the highest, the best moral, intellectual, and religious culture, inasmuch as each of these may have most important agencies in the production of such physical conditions, as may make their reappearance in offspring, a matter to be calculated on, or certainly labored after, in our discipline, our culture of them. Every thing, says Mrs. Barbauld, educates our offspring. The earliest influence exerted upon the child, be it but in the look, or in the voice of the parent

or earliest attendant, may make impressions which time may never obliterate, but which in the accumulation of the like in the progress of age, may settle the great question of character to all future time. Who can question that it is by such influences that the organ of the brain is first impressed, and that by these impressions its future functions may be materially regulated if not wholly determined? In this view of it our subject assumes the deepest interest. If individual, intellectual and moral characteristics may be transmitted, and this through the agency of organization in any appreciable manner, how great becomes the responsibleness of the individual to the ages which are coming after him. If knavery, or predisposition to it, may become hereditary—if vice in all its forms may continue itself in one's progeny—if moral sentiment, and even religious faith, or rather want of faith, may cohere with peculiarities of organization which have had their origin in habitual, permanent intellectual conditions and habits, of what vital importance is it to the coming time that men should aim at the highest culture, the truest self-control, to the most careful utterance of opinion, since it may be that they are in all these agencies making themselves the active causes of their own continuance—of checking the progress of society in regards the importance of which is not equalled by any of the other agencies or relations of life.

II. But however it may be with the intellectual, and of its connections, or dependencies on the physical, or whether the relation be that of cause or effect, no question exists that physical peculiarities, or conditions, are transmissible, and that in these respects the child may be but the repetition, in a new development, of the parent. The manner in which this is effected is through the agency of *predisposition*. By this word is meant such an organization as will allow of the easy operation of morbid causes in the production of disease. I say organization, for beyond this, researches or reasonings cannot go, and when we say this, it is not to be understood that it is at all known in what one organization so differs from another in different individuals as that one shall be by it predisposed to particular diseases, while others are entirely exempt from, or are not liable to them. A man by

luxurious and indolent habits—by the habitual use of stimulants of various kinds—by the daily indulgence in food of excessively nutritious properties, produces in himself the disease called *Gout.* There may have been in him no inherited predisposition to this disease. He has produced this by his modes of living, and the exciting causes of the disease itself may have been also applied by himself. He at first suffers from his self-created disease only after intervals of various length. These gradually become shorter and shorter, it may be. But however long, a degree of invalidism gradually comes to occupy them, so that the gouty man passes most of his time in getting the means of diminishing pain, and of finding those which will give him most pleasure. He often gets the first from the popular empiricism, and the last are supplied to him by the table. In this way confirmed ill health becomes his condition, and his occupation is mainly found in making it tolerable, or, so to speak, *in enjoying it.* He is an instance of disease produced by habits of life independent entirely of inherited predisposition. More commonly there is the latter, and in this we trace the history of transmitted disease. The offspring furnish the proof. How exceedingly common was it when gout was a common disease, to see it existing as an heir-loom in certain families; and as such families were often of consideration in the community, this disease was by some considered as among the evidences of gentle birth, and gentle blood. The child inherited the disease, or its condition, and the habits to which he was born, and in which he was nurtured, made it pretty certain that the predisposition would not exist *alone.* The disease commonly appeared in due time. What is worthy note here is the fact that the disease was very much confined to the sons of such parents. The daughters very rarely showed the disease. They were doubtless born with the predisposition. Whence their exemption? I answer, in the simple fact that the habits of their lives did not in the first place increase the predisposition; and did nothing to produce the disease. They did not fall into the luxurious, or indolent habits by which they were surrounded. The instincts of their sex preserved them from indulgences which would have as surely brought disease upon them as they do upon

men. Their whole modes of life, and their true aim and place in society, are to be looked to principally as the causes of the exemption referred to.

Insanity, that awful malady, which is the dethronement of reason, is transmitted to offspring. It may be the product of known causes in families in which it has never before appeared, and though produced thus accidentally, may be transmitted to others. Intemperance is one of such causes. The exhaustion of physical and intellectual power in business, and especially if such business be unsuccessful, may become causes. Most commonly, however, it exists in families, in the blood, so to speak, and predisposition to it being inherited, it is pretty apt to declare itself as the direct product of the causes by which it is surrounded. Gout is the consequence of the habitual violation of the laws of health. We have seen how in the case of women it may not show itself, and have offered an explanation of this fact. Now the discussion of the predisposition to insanity has its principal interest in the fact that, where it exists, such arrangements for prevention may be made as not only may cause a suspension in the occurrence of the malady, but also destroy the predisposition itself. This is attempted by avoiding intermarriages in families, which are known to perpetuate both physical and intellectual peculiarities, as well as tendencies to certain diseases. But from almost the necessities of the case, this method too often fails in its practical applications, to be relied upon. We must look to nearer and surer methods to obviate so great an evil, to prevent so terrible a disease. We must look for them in physical culture, and in the whole discipline of early life. We must look for them in our moral and intellectual methods with the young, and secure to them a wise guidance, and a wise and generous sympathy. It will not come of a slavish regard to impertinent details, that the predisposition to insanity will be destroyed or removed. It will be in the apprehension of true principles, and in their wise application. Men fail because they too much insist on the rule, when the basis of the rule, that on which it rests, most demands regard; and so physical and intellectual habits are at length, and certainly, produced, in the supremacy of which, both the

mind, and the body, will at last give way. What sadder fact than is this, the continuance of human suffering by the social arrangements around us, and which are designed for individual comfort and good, it may be, but which every day produce the most melancholy opposites! But it is said, "how rare the suffering—how rare insanity"! Is that rare which is numbered by thousands? And is the term insanity rightly limited to those only who fill the mad-houses of the land? It is a terrible calamity, and it is continued amongst us by the popular indifference to the circumstances which lead to it. Would not a truer culture for all, a wiser adaptation of all social influences to the best end, do much to prevent what it now costs so much to provide for, and which when the most has been done, is felt to be so little?

I have referred to one physical, and one intellectual malady, the predisposition to which may be transmitted from parent to child, and the exciting causes of which are on every side. I have but begun the catalogue. Diseases in great variety, and involving consequences of various interest, from the slightest to the greatest. Scrofula is one. This word, which in its popular use is given to a certain local condition, or disease of certain glands about the neck and elsewhere, is, in fact, a morbid state of the whole body, which merely declares itself in the glands alluded to. It is a state of universal weakness, of imperfect vitality, so to speak, which is the foundation of, or predisposition to, the gravest maladies, consumption being one. Here, then, is a disease which is continued in families by mere transmission from parent to child, and so sure is the descent, that it sometimes happens that a generation is almost wholly cut off by it. Physical education will do most to prevent such wide disaster. The separation of families, by preventing intermarriages, and other obvious means, are all important agencies to the same end.

Specific diseases, such as are produced by the contact of the healthy with a matter produced in the sick, though so generally are not to be taken but once, and cannot be transmitted through progeny, may, some of them, be taken again and again, and may be communicated to the child. The disease which has its growth

and continuance in licentiousness, in illicit indulgence, is one of the most terrible of these scourges, and, to the disgrace of society, is among the most frequent. The disease referred to, attacks and kills the unborn child. It destroys the life of the young. It appears in later life, in forms, which, having resemblances to other diseases, may escape the popular knowledge, but concerning which, the judicious physician cannot be in doubt. It is a curious fact that the specific contagions which attack men, and without the least agency of theirs, should be self-limited, observing certain exact laws of beginning, progress, and termination, and are taken but once,—it is, I say, a curious fact, that while these are what I have said of them in their history, those which men contract by their own agency, their vicious, and not unfrequently infamous habits, are not self-limited, but continue indefinitely; go on from one destructive step to another, till the whole body falls under its loathsome empire: nay, more, the taint of which reaches to progeny, and produces infinite suffering and death to the innocent, and to the most helpless! So important have these facts been deemed by foreign states, that the law has been called in to prevent such measureless evil. Houses are licensed, and bureaus or offices are established, having medical men attached to them, whose duty it is to visit the "houses for prostitution," to make professional examinations of the inmates, and to remove those who are diseased, to hospitals for treatment, and for cure. The reason for this is the ignorance of the young of the consequences of their own vicious acts, and so to save the unwary and the ignorant. I do not stop to ask what are the moral tendencies of such legal agencies for preventing the natural consequences of vice, but I do ask if some means should not be adopted to save the unborn, the helpless, and the innocent young, from the terrible consequences of their parents' sin, which the popular indifference to this subject so largely and deeply involves? The prevention can only be looked for in the moral state, and its free exercise, of communities. While incontinence, and promiscuous intercourse,—while fidelity to the marriage contract is hardly deemed a virtue,—while base and infamous men are admitted to the best society, with their sin or its consequences

written on their very faces, and while the wretched women they have seduced by money into sin are deemed loathsome and abhorrent to the sense, and to the heart,—while such things be, you can do but little to prevent the transmission of the most terrible diseases, and the infliction of measureless misery.

The subject which has engaged us in this paper is of the deepest interest. The popular ignorance concerning it is so great, that we cannot be surprised at the popular practice. The "let alone" doctrine has in this, and kindred topics, its widest application. Let men who have love of the individual, and interest in the state, do what they may to move to right thought and action those who are dead to the deepest interests of all humanity.